McGee (1898:214)

estimated that maritime resources provided two-thirds of the Seri diet. Kroeber (1931: 20), approximately 30 years later, estimated the proportion at about three-fifths. In the winter of 1960, 30 years after Kroeber's visit, the Seri were obtaining at least three-fifths of their food from the sea.

In pursuit of their main source of subsistence, the Seri travel up and down the narrow coastal band. In the winter of 1960 they were occupying one temporary camp toward the southern end of the band and a permanent camp at the northern extreme. Seri women and children gather mollusks; fishing is a male occupation. In addition to gathering and fishing for their own needs, the Seri dispose of a portion of their catch on the commercial market. This enterprise began about 1930, and was encouraged by the establishment, in 1958, of the Sociedad Cooperative de Produccion Pesquera Seri with the cooperation of the Mexican government.

The Pacific green turtle constitutes the largest single item in the Seri diet for at least six months of the year—from January to June—and it is also caught occasionally at other seasons. In 1896 McGee estimated that it provided 25 per cent of the total food supply. Emphasizing the intimate ecological relationship between the Seri and the turtle, McGee (1898: 186-187) wrote:

> ... perhaps half of the aggregate life of the tribe is spent within easy reach of its [the turtle's] feeding and breeding grounds, and tribesman and turtle have entered into an inimical communality something like that of the Siouan Indian and buffalo in olden time. ...

Kroeber (1931: 20) believed that McGee stressed the Seri-turtle relationship too strongly and overestimated its contribution to the diet. McGee (1898: 187), in support of the importance of the turtle to the Seri, points to the fact that the turtle carapace is used for, among other things, a house covering and buckler, a cradle, a coffin, and footgear. The carapace is currently used for supporting and roofing houses and as a starvation food. The contribution of the turtle to the diet varies from year to year, but observations made in 1960 suggest a range of from 15 to 20 per cent as a reasonable estimate.

Seri men fish for turtle from boats, which are manned by two or three men and are propelled by oars, sails, outboard engines, or any combination of the three. The boats operate either individually or in groups. The men fish by night or day, depending on the weather and sea conditions. When they fish at night, they use a kerosene lamp to attract turtles to the surface. The principal implement is the harpoon.

The harpoon tackle of the Seri is illustrated in Figure 1. It consists of a foreshaft (c-h), a mainshaft (j-k), and an extension cord (i). The component parts of the foreshaft are a projectile point (c), a gasket (d), a wrapping cord (f), a hafting base (g), and a lead cord (e and h). In preparation for turtle fishing, the hafting base (g) is plugged into the socket (j) on the main shaft (k), and the extension cord (i) is looped through the lead cord (h).

The Pelican Skin Robe

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Toshne or Pelican Island - Kino Bay - 1936

It was the dark of the moon and a very black night, ideal for surprising the Pelicans asleep, roosting on the steep slope above the waters of the Sea of Cortez. The Pelican is a very wary bird and cannot be approached in the light of the moon. 123 223

At sundown we had climbed several hundred feet to the saddle between two peaks on the Island of Alcatraz in Kino Bay off the coast of Sonora. We rolled up in our blankets and hugged the great volcanic rocks at the crest, to be as inconspicuous as possible to the great birds circling the peaks to seek a roosting place on the west slope of the Island.

Santo Blanco had provided himself with a torch made from the slender rods of a dead *pitahalla* (organ) cactus which he had tied together in a long bundle. The four young Seris who joined him also had a torch and in addition, each had provided himself with a club. We took no fire arms. Senor Roberto Thomson, my companion, had arranged this trip with Santo Blanco, for my benefit. [416] • [124]

[text continues on p. 215]